

CLAIMS

1. A marketplace, comprising:
 - 5 an Internet website content supported on a webserver that allows frequent buyers and sellers to pre-register and pre-qualify one another so that surplus merchandise can find a quick and ready market;
a retail-content computer-program module included in the Internet website content;
 - 10 an authenticated trading computer-program module included in the Internet website content;
a staged-auctions computer-program module included in the Internet website content;
 - 15 a trading-tools computer-program module included in the Internet website content; and
an integrated purchase-order fulfillment computer-program module included in the Internet website content;
 - 20 wherein, sellers can conduct auctions of merchandise over the Internet in at least two rounds in which a first round is limited to a select group of said buyers.
2. The marketplace of claim 1, wherein:
 - 25 an Internet connection allows a buyer-seller community and a public to log-on to the marketplace.
3. The marketplace of claim 1, further comprising:
 - a database for storing information provided by users when registering that includes basic facts necessary to facilitate sales between users, and preferences that each have for types and kinds or merchandise.

4. The marketplace of claim 3, wherein:

the database is such that said users are issued "passports" when they register that are required for a posting of an auction.

5

5. The marketplace of claim 4, wherein:

the database is such that said users that are issued "passports" are able to issue other users a "visa" that allows them to participate in a private first-round pre-auction.

10

6. The marketplace of claim 5, wherein:

the database is such that said users who are issued said "visa" request such from a seller.

15

7. The marketplace of claim 5, wherein:

the database is such that said users who are issued said "visa" are unsolicitedly offered such from a seller.

8. The marketplace of claim 3, wherein:

20

the database is such that when said users are issued "passports" they are required to identify at least one preferred trading partner.

9. The marketplace of claim 1, wherein:

25

the retail-content computer-program module collects and disseminates news and other information needed by users to stay on top of relevant events that affect their businesses and business activities.

10. The marketplace of claim 1, wherein:

the authenticated trading computer-program module issues passports to pre-registered and pre-qualified users for their access to the marketplace.

5

11. The marketplace of claim 1, wherein:

the staged-auctions computer-program module manages any posting and a later conduct of a pre-auction and public auction, and sends e-mails to any visa holders to announce any of relevant pre-auction and public auctions.

10

12. The marketplace of claim 1, wherein:

the trading-tools computer-program module allows a buyer to post a merchandise profile they will buy, and e-mails are automatically generated to buyers to notify them that such merchandise has been posted for sale.

15

13. The marketplace of claim 1, wherein:

the integrated purchase-order fulfillment computer-program module provides synchronization of company purchasing and logistic systems with others.

20

14. A method for creating and communicating auctions of merchandise over the Internet between retailers, vendors, manufacturers, and wholesalers at network client sites, the method comprising the steps of:

25

submitting a description of merchandise and preferences by a seller to commence an auction;

choosing by said seller whether to have a staged-auction;

if a staged auction, listing at least one preferred buyer who may participate in a first-round pre-auction;

e-mailing each of said preferred buyers a notice that they are invited to participate in said pre-auction;

5 conducting said first-round pre-auction for said preferred buyers by accepting bids for said merchandise;

deducting any units of said merchandise that received a bid from a total to determine a remaining total of merchandise; and

10 opening up a wider second-round auction of said remaining total of merchandise to include other than said preferred buyers.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein:

the step of conducting said first-round pre-auction ends at an appointed time.

15

16. The method of claim 14, wherein:

the step of conducting said first-round pre-auction ends when a predetermined minimum number of items have received bids.

20 17. The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of:

automatically generating any purchase orders and a bills-of-lading for any of said merchandise according to information gathered from said seller and said preferred buyer during a registration process.

25 18. The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of:

registering users who are afterwards able to participate in said pre-auction as a buyer or a seller and issuing a passport upon registration.

19. The method of claim 14, wherein:

the step of listing at least one preferred buyer is such that a visa is granted by said seller to said buyer.

09745023 400400